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HM ‘A’ School Instructors Promotes Healthy Habits, Cultural Diversity Through Dance

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By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jacquelyn D. Childs, NMETC public affairs



Instructors and students from the Medical Education and Training Campus (METC) at Joint Base San Antonio – Fort Sam Houston dance during a latin dance lesson in METC's student activity center. The Diversity Council at Navy Medicine Training Support Center (NMTSC), METC's Navy service component administratively responsible for its personnel, began holding weekly lessons to promote health and cultural awareness in the command. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jacquelyn D. Childs)

SAN ANTONIO – The Navy Medicine Training Support Center (NMTSC) Diversity Council started a weekly Latin dance class Aug. 3 at the Medical Education and Training Campus (METC), promoting healthy habits while encouraging a culture of inclusion.

The lessons include salsa, bachata, and merengue and are designed to keep students active while preparing for an Hispanic Heritage Festival at Joint Base San Antonio – Fort Sam Houston anticipated for late September.



"We're trying to submerge the command into a little more of the Latin culture," said Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (HM1) Luis Deffit, the lead dance instructor. "We've been growing as a diversity

council at NMTSC so we wanted to go a little bit bigger this year. Not just have the heritage festival but go ahead and get started ahead of time to give some people the opportunity to learn these dances."

The staff at NMTSC are constantly organizing new ways for Navy, Army, and Air Force students to get active and participate in healthy, uplifting events such as runs, talent competitions and dance lessons. The Latin dance class provides students the opportunity to socialize in a fun environment, to stay active developing healthy habits and a lifetime of good health, and to catch a glimpse into another culture.

"People who have only one single vision of who we are, their opportunities are very limited," said Deffit who joined the Diversity Council to help educate and raise awareness. "It's part of leadership to submerge yourself in different cultures so you can connect better with your troops around you, not just one ethnic background."

Everyone who attended the first dance class agreed they got some exercise, learned a lot while having fun and would love to return.

"I wanted to learn how to dance better and HM1 Deffit is a great instructor so I figured he'd be the best person to learn all of the different dances from," said Army student Pvt. Charmaine Ibarra. "It was fun. I definitely will be here next week."



"HM1 asked us if we wanted to come out, and I'd done salsa dance lessons before, so I figured, 'Sure, I'd like to see if I remember some of the stuff.' And I kind of did," said Navy student Seaman Christopher Zurcher. "It was a lot of fun. It's fun to learn something new."

Deffit said he hopes to see more people come out in the weeks to come. The lessons will be held every Wednesday night throughout August, Navy Medicine's Preventive Health Month, and through mid-September, Healthy Aging Month. He encouraged anyone and everyone to show up, regardless of previous experience.

"Every week, we're going to take about half an hour to warm up and catch everyone up, and the second half hour will be for the people who've been constantly showing up so they can practice what they've already learned and learn some more," said Deffit.

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